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Keller, Frances Alice

A leaf from Lenin's policy
on manpower

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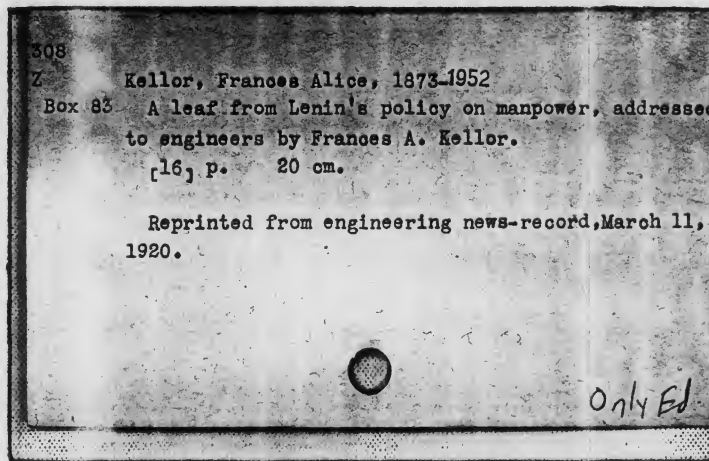
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A Leaf from Lenin's Policy On Manpower



Addressed to Engineers
By FRANCES A. KELLOR

Reprinted from
ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD

March 11, 1920

17 June 1920 Jow

A Leaf From Lenin's Policy On Manpower

A Bolshevik reign in Russia is for the moment assured. Lenin's formulation of ideas, plus his ability to put them into operation, promise some interesting experiments in handling manpower problems. American business men will do well to set their denunciatory powers aside and to develop their analytical and critical faculties to the utmost, to understand the economic changes taking place in that country and to so profit by the lesson that similar changes may not occur in America by identical methods.

The responsibility for checking Bolshevism rests with industrial leaders, not with political leaders. The economic bulwarking of the present system of production, not the passage of laws, is the answer to Bolshevik propaganda.

Throughout the world, we have to deal with materialism—to think first of food, shelter, clothing, rewards, profits, surplus, investments, and securities. Lenin personifies the height of materialism. His program is basically economic. He relies upon dictatorship and force to make it effective. America is not less in the grip of materialism—even though riot and bloodshed are for the time being absent. Everywhere the question is "What can I get out of it?" and "Whom can I boss?"

The question confronting industrial leadership in America is: By peaceful methods, through a genuine co-operation of men, and with the aid of science, can the various elements of human power be united on a common basis of production—a *manpower* as inclusive of management as of men? Can there be formulated the kind of manpower engineering which will compass the field and train the new leaders whom the economic world needs?

Certain as men may be that Lenin's materialism and use of force will fail, he has at his command for his experiment the greatest single supply of raw manpower ever placed under one central domination.

LENIN'S LABOR RULES

Franklin got electricity from the storm of the heavens and paved the way for Edison; Lenin may get from riot and bloodshed the principles that mean his own destruction—but the truth of a new science to be established under new leadership.

Lenin has laid down the principle that eight hours of work

is the standard; and that during that time *nothing that is not conducive to production and cannot be measured in terms of production shall be permitted in industry*. It is the first clear, relentless application of manpower to production on a large scale that the world has ever seen. At one stroke it abolishes both welfare measures and strikes. The introduction of any welfare or human measures, of any recreation or other social features, not necessitated solely by production, will not be tolerated. He holds that the plant is no place for civics, education or semi-industrial expression. For these most ample provision should be made outside of working hours and should be assiduously encouraged.

Lenin sees more clearly the line of demarcation between the application of manpower to production and manpower running idle than is evidenced anywhere else in the world.

"Iron discipline" during working hours is the method by which he hopes to make it succeed. If it does not come voluntarily from the men, then bayonets or penalties will do as well. Lenin's own statement can hardly be improved upon:

"Economic improvement depends on higher discipline of the toilers, on higher skill, efficiency and *intensity* of labor and its better organization. Material production requires an absolute and strict unity of the will. How can we secure a strict unity of will? By subjecting the will of thousands to the will of one. This subjection of the participants in the common work, who are ideally conscientious and disciplined, may resemble the mild leading of an orchestra; or it may take the acute form of a dictatorship. But at any rate, complete submission to a single will during work is absolutely necessary for the success of processes of work which is organized on the type of large machine industry. We must learn to combine the strong energetic breaking of all restraint on the part of the toiling masses *with iron discipline during work*, with absolute submission to the will of one person during work."

Now contrast with this the freedom of manpower Lenin recommends when it is running idle outside of the shop. The workers are to be attracted to active participation in political life, they are to have meetings and recreation without stint. Lenin says:

"Our aim is to attract every member of the poor classes to practical participation in general manage-

ment [political] and the different steps leading toward this end (the more diverse the better) should be carefully registered, studied, systematized, verified on broader experience and legalized. It is our object to obtain the free performance of state obligations of every toiler after he is through with the eight-hour session of productive work."

THE SITUATION IN AMERICA

What is the lesson in this experiment to America? Despite the fact that America is the greatest machine-producing country in the world, and has tremendous industrial genius for organization, it is very far from handling its manpower in an orderly, economic way. Industrial leaders are groping for a uniting principle, and for standards and methods of operation, in this whole field.

Production is struggling in a morass. Men are at variance over what words to use in referring to workmen and to management. Some employers think it makes a difference if their men are called employees or workers, or workingmen. Capital and labor organized in different camps find it increasingly difficult to keep their separate identity, when workmen are so fast becoming investors and small land owners and stockholders. Socialists have to resort to extreme measures to keep the bitterness in class consciousness and to hold workers and management apart. The Communist understands and forgives the member who shrinks at throwing a bomb, but distrusts and expels the member who discusses industrial betterment in company with a capitalist.

Indications are fast multiplying that "welfare work" and "scientific management" are alike doomed, with nothing as yet to take their places. Each corporation, according to the whim of its directors, experiments with the Leitch plan or the Whitely plan or the works council, and centers its hopes in such isolated panaceas.

More and more the industrial engineer is being called upon. Plants are flooded with "service" schemes from aspiring Croesuses. These cover everything from plant posters to the educational spy sitting on the job alongside of the men whom he aims to educate.

While this confusion of mind and sterility of effort prevail, the waste of power goes on unchecked. It is estimated that it costs American production \$30,000,000 a year just to exchange men with each other. The labor market is unorganized, each

employer competing with another for the new supply of men. It is apparently no concern of industry that millions of unskilled immigrant workmen are going back home, and that laws are to be passed forbidding their return. They read with complacency about the hunting of "Reds," not realizing that every man caught in the net who is not guilty and his countrymen who are not Bolsheviks and hate injustice, retaliate by striking on the job, resulting in a low morale which makes poor quality and output low.

Employers realize that something must be done, but instead of getting together and finding a way which will work for all industry, each goes off in his own little corner of the world and experiments and wastes power, proving the success or failure of what at most can be but temporary panaceas.

ENGINEER HOLDS SOLUTION

Now is the time to bring law and order out of this confused vision and disordered effort. Nothing but science has ever been able to understand power of any kind. Engineering is the only method that holds out any promise of ultimate success. Increasingly the engineer, untrained in manpower, but having the essential ground work, is becoming the manager of men. In the next quarter of a century he will be the chief director of manpower. He is the man that will defeat Lenin, by reducing his ideas to law and order, without revolution.

The war has revealed to men that they are not anywhere near their capacity for output. It has created a demand for comforts among all men which the capacity of men will be taxed to meet. This is the problem of production. If this problem is not solved under a system of capitalism, it will be solved under some other system. It cannot be evaded.

The present concentration of labor into one group and of management into another cannot go on and get anywhere. Already the lines are hopelessly confused and radicals and reactionaries are splitting the ranks of each wide open. Laws have proven useless as stimulants to production.

The application of manpower to production in its essence is the province of science to solve—just as much as the application of heat power and electric power to production was the province of science to solve.

The general acceptance of this idea has been delayed by the usual fumbling in any new field. The efficiency engineer conceived of it in terms of saving lost motion. The industrial engineer conceived of it in terms of patchwork—a fixing up of

industrial relations. The welfare man is a kind of compromise of the employer with his conscience who thinks something should be done but not too thoroughly.

Scientific management was an imposition of theories; it was a juxtaposition of words without scientific basis or credence and was distrusted from the beginning. The trade union is a kind of armed camp from which men skirmish for advantage and position with little relation to the principles of production, and the employers' association is little better.

Long before the uniting principles in heat, power, or electrical power were found, so much as man could discover and use was applied to increase production and to secure comforts. It was a long way from the discovery to the formulation of the science.

There is similarly to be a long line of discoveries and of experiments in manpower, which parallel, though they are not identical with, those of other kinds of power. Marx believed the final answer to be Socialism. Lenin thinks he has found it in Communism. Gompers thinks it is in the trades unions. These are but passing movements which will eventually contribute their share to give the world a science of manpower.

The American inventive mind does not tolerate chaos and waste in other forms of power. The best minds and knowledge of engineering would be put to work in laboratories and shops to find a remedy for leaks in steam and electrical power. They would be the subject of scientific inquiry and of discussion.

Not so with manpower. The subject is approached from the position of capital or of labor. Men's minds are impelled toward it to right wrongs or to earn rewards—or to propound theories or to ride hobbies.

When we speak of the civil or the mechanical or electrical or chemical engineer we know he has had certain preliminary training and that there is a language in which we can talk to him which we both understand. He knows certain preliminary things that we do not have to bother about. When an engineer is engaged to design and build a bridge, the contractor has certain definite things to rely upon, and the engineer's reputation is the application of his knowledge, experience and initiative in a highly competitive world which stimulates him into perfection in his occupation.

Varied as are the courses for engineers, there are certain uniform fundamentals that give them mental integrity and an operation of mind highly essential to handling the subject matter.

What of the men who handle manpower? Call them together and see what is to be found in any miscellaneous group. Here is the engineer with training; beside him is the foreman promoted because he got results—often with his fists. Across the room is the secretary loaned by an organization interested in saving souls and his neighbor is an efficiency engineer. From whatever walks of life they finally arrive at handling manpower, their training is incongruous; it is everything from the grammar school to the medical college, plus industrial experience or minus it, as the case may be.

Not less interesting than the equipment of "personnel" men, are their duties. It is anywhere from the simple one of running a lunch room or conducting a class in English to handling all of the functions of an up-to-date employment department or a works council. The scope of his duties may be governed by an enlightened general manager or a foreman opposed to most changes.

The problems of power are the same, whether it is to be extracted from men or from materials. How to get power units requires knowledge and organization. With manpower it is men; with heat and electricity it is materials. How to use power requiring management, how to increase power from existing units, requires research and experiment. Not so many years ago, the problems of electrical power and its application seemed not more difficult and variable than are those of manpower today. Scientists obtained the secret and put it to practical use and reduced their findings to engineering terms. Scientists will find the secret of manpower just as soon as they set about it in the spirit of attaining knowledge and its practical application.

How to get power units is the problem of the labor market, and its organization. There must be fundamental principles which can be discovered and laws which can be applied; their discovery and formulation is but a matter of time. How to use this power concerns itself with the treatment of men and the conditions of work. There are as definite principles and methods that govern this field as exist in any other field of power, but we do not know them yet. How to increase manpower from existing units concerns itself with incentives, rewards, and participation in management.

Lenin hopes to discover these secrets by the use of force through communistic organization. The country that makes the discoveries and reduces them to operating terms by the use of science through a democracy in which all men—hand

and brain workers alike are recognized—will be the master of production.

An analysis of any one hundred American plants struggling with shortage of labor, leaks in power, and low grade power that defy methods being installed to produce power, shows no agreement in theory or operation upon the elemental factors, which may be put as follows:

1. *Certainty of employment*, which gives the stability of power.
2. *Incentives and rewards*, which give the volume of power.
3. *Treatment and working conditions*, which give the intensity of power.
4. *Participation in management*, which releases unused and undeveloped forms of power.

Not only is there no agreement on the theory or method of operation of these elemental factors, but we have failed even to use our discoveries. In the rush of the war, the varying grades of productivity in plants was found to be a deterrent in winning the war. The crude method of distributing skilled workers in plants of low output was adopted and was called the dilution of labor. With the close of the war, much of the co-operative elements incident to the war disappeared, and with it even glimmers of the intelligent handling of manpower. We are back where we started, fighting along class lines.

THE REMEDY

What is the remedy?

First of all, it is a slow one—which will not appeal greatly to the impatient American producer.

Second, it is not an emergency measure, and cannot be handled as a campaign or a drive, or a panacea.

Third, it is not a lot of disjointed efforts into which men may be stampeded through a fear of Bolshevism or of anything else.

Fourth, it is not a defensive negative remedy, but a constructive positive remedy.

Fifth, manpower is no longer to be regarded as an individual-plant problem to be dealt with according to local plant ideas any more than is electric or heat power to be applied irrespective of governing principles and methods.

Sixth, manpower is not to be fully handled by the setting up of elaborate government machinery to deal with its outbursts and disagreements.

There is required *first of all* a scientific inquiry into the application of manpower to production, which shall be free of all imputation of bias toward either capital or labor. Analysis must replace propaganda. Such an inquiry as a basis for the adoption of principles and standards and formulations must precede the introduction of any courses for the training of men and must cover as essentials certainty of employment, incentives and rewards, treatment and working conditions, and participation in management.

With such data in hand, we can begin to see what things belong in the plant as 8-hour production measures and what belong to the community as 16 hours free time. Nothing is more important to the plant than that there should be clear governing principles upon plant matters as distinguished from community matters.

To go on making recreation and hospitals, and lunch rooms and lectures and dances, and baseball teams and concerts, plant activities without definite relation to production, is to invite disaster. It invites it because their introduction causes suspicion and resentment, sarcasm and misunderstanding.

To go on saddling the community with obligations which are the result of misapplication of manpower in production is to invite legislation and investigation and inspection and other outside interferences, which hamper the determination of scientific principles and methods in the application of manpower.

To continue in plants outside uplift agencies, knowing little or nothing about production, and to introduce temporary expedients—not an organized part of industrial organization—is certain to be disastrous.

ORGANIZATION OF DATA

There is data in abundance; there are experiments in profusion. The present method of collating them is for an investigator to make a study and write a book or deliver a lecture. There is an endless procession of books and lectures. This procession is now being succeeded by an endless variety of industrial and human engineers. Not any one line of data, not any one set of experiments or of theories of the various engineers is submitted to the tests required of any other form of power before it is applied. A manpower experiment tried out in one plant is no more ready for general recommendation as fundamentally sound for all industry to adopt than is an experiment in the field of mechanical power. Perfection,

secured by a variety of tests, is as important in one field as in the other.

There is an almost complete absence of any such conception of manpower and its application.

What one incentive or reward can be counted on to produce maximum power in every plant where it is applied?

Do any two employers agree upon the amount of power produced by profit-sharing, and what type gets most power?

Do any two plants follow the same system of assuring certainty of employment and is there any one accepted method which keeps the human equipment up to a given percentage of perfection?

What part do ventilation and heat and light play in working conditions to intensify power, and are they standardized in marketable shape so other plants can adopt them?

Conference after conference, congress after congress, meets to discuss markets, raw materials, prices, etc., and are silent on manpower—the application of which to production is the biggest single unsolved scientific problem in the world today.

There are many treatises on the subject of labor, but who knows whether they are any good? Someone makes a discovery in electricity. It is immediately reduced to operating terms or it is discarded. Someone writes a book on civil engineering. Ten thousand engineers pounce upon it, read it, apply their experience and knowledge and it becomes a textbook, or a general reference book, or it is soon covered with dust. The point is, these engineers are interested in maintaining the standing of their profession, of protecting the integrity of their science, of establishing standards of learning and of efficiency.

With manpower it is different. Someone gives a thrilling account of the works council. Without finding out about it or its principles of operation, or its relation to the whole scheme of handling men, hundreds of plants install it and then wait for the millennium. One plant has success with a profit-sharing scheme and then another plant, adding here and there a little individual touch to satisfy its local pride, initiates something that gets a poor return on its investment. Result, the idea of profit sharing becomes the subject of controversy in which few facts and fewer tests appear and each defends his own pet scheme.

These pages could be filled with illustrations of hap-hazard schemes installed in such disjointed ways. There is no central authority—because there is no science and no professional pride to preserve it, to which the industrial leader desirous of

measuring up to his obligations can turn for enlightenment and be sure he is getting disinterested information and tested experiments. Why should not the Works Council or the bonus system or any other form of generator of power be subjected to as rigid tests as a new design of steam engine? Both are designed for one purpose—to increase production. Defective co-operative management is likely to prove much more destructive than a defective steam engine. In the one case we permit a theorist, with little training and less reputation, to submit a design which is often adopted untested; in the other case, we ask for a guarantee unless the trade mark constitutes one.

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERS

Shall we get the science or the engineer first? Once industrial leaders are convinced that manpower is an engineering job and that the efficiency of the present system of production depends largely upon the engineer, they will come together, and begin to work out the fundamental principles and methods of operation and will begin to ask for trained men.

The engineering colleges are awakening to the coming demand, but they, too, are doing patchwork and have not grasped the idea that the application of manpower to production is a science and that they may take a big lead in its formulation and ultimate operation. Most of the courses are still couched in terms of management rather than in terms of manpower.

Coincident, therefore, with analysis of existing data there should go an analysis of existing training courses and the formulation of manpower engineering courses that will meet the growing demand for trained men.

America senses but dimly as yet the demand that will be made upon its engineers for foreign countries. They will be called upon to handle manpower and to settle finance questions for which they have little preliminary training or basic judgment. American industries will be hard put to find substitutes for these men. The answer is the manpower engineer trained as thoroughly and as fast as American institutions can do it. The country that produces this kind of engineer will control the resources of the world.

Let us have the engineer, through the Engineering Council and the Engineering Division of the National Research Council undertake a thorough scientific research of the problems of manpower.

Let us follow this by the formulation of the essentials of the science and by a definition of its operations.

Let us have a manpower research center as free from self-interested control as any physical laboratory in America.

Let us outline practical courses in engineering colleges to meet the demand for trained men.

Let us take a leaf out of Lenin's policy of applying manpower eight hours a day relentlessly to the job, cutting out the camouflage and fog, and make Bolshevism impossible in America through revolution because American industrial leadership has believed in and solved the problem through evolution.

THE PROBLEMS OF POWER ARE THE SAME, WHETHER
EXTRACTED FROM MEN OR MATERIALS. THE WORKS
COUNCIL OR THE BONUS SYSTEM SHOULD BE SUB-
JECTED TO THE SAME TESTS AS THE STEAM EN-
GINE. BOTH ARE DESIGNED TO GENERATE POWER.

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